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Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 15 (2011) 1621–1625

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**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

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WCES-2011

# Identification of state of knowledge and viewpoints about cross curriculum approach of cross curriculum disciplines committee members staffed in preparing 2005 primary education curricula

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## Abstract

“Whole-curriculum approach” is adopted in preparing 2005 primary education curricula. One of the reflections to the 2005 primary education curricula of this approach is determination of eight cross curriculum disciplines and association between outcomes of lessons and these cross curriculum disciplines. This research is limited to eight members of cross curriculum disciplines committee staffed in preparing 2005 primary education curricula. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using descriptive analysis approach. The findings revealed that cross curriculum disciplines committee members have limited knowledge over cross-curriculum approach (definition, function, application, evaluation, requirement to be able to teach and the reason for application).

**Keywords:** Cross-curriculum approach, whole-curriculum approach, primary school curriculum

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## 1. Introduction

According to Gözütok and Alkın (2008, p.839), who stated that “*whole-curriculum approach*” is adopted in developing 2005 Primary Education Program, eight cross curriculum disciplines out of the reflections of this approach on new primary education program should be identified and the outcomes related to these cross curriculum disciplines should be associated with course outcomes.

Cross curriculum approach is a new concept for The Turkish National Education System. Therefore, the program developers and the teachers do not have the necessary information about this approach.

Cross-curriculum approach requires a recognition that knowledge should not be locked into a particular area or domains, but should be related to other disciplines. The cross-curriculum approach argues for the thematic elaboration of educational content (cross-curriculum disciplines) over the traditional conception of knowledge as compartmentalized into disciplines or domains of knowledge that are not interrelated. In this direction, cross curriculum disciplines are identified and related to learning areas (Naval et al., 2003). Cross-curriculum area can be defined as the components that affect the course outcomes in various levels and contribute to the improvements of course outcomes (Mels, 2008a).

If teachers are not informed, they are likely to encounter problems regarding planning, implementation and evaluation of cross curriculum teaching. Thus, students may not have acquired the desired outcomes. What teachers, students, parents and school staff should do about cross curriculum disciplines; how cross curriculum are associated with disciplines course outcomes haven’t been certain yet in the process of five-year implementation of the program.

For these reasons we need to take program committee members’ views and determine their state of knowledge about cross curriculum approach. In this study, the following research questions are tried to be answered:

- What is the state of knowledge of program committee members about cross curriculum approach in terms of its definition, function, and reasons of its usage, implementation and evaluation in teaching process and required equipments teacher should have cross curriculum teaching?
- What are their views about the path followed in the selection of cross curriculum disciplines in the 2005 Primary Education Program?
- What are their views about path that can be followed to enable teachers to acquire information regarding cross curriculum's structure, philosophy and implementation?
- What are their views about problems emerging in process of structuring cross curriculum approach into the 2005 Primary Education Program?

## 2. Method, Instrument and Procedure

The data collected through interviews was analyzed using content analysis approach and holistic rubric. The study group included eight members of cross curriculum disciplines committee staffed in preparing 2005 primary education curricula.

"Cross Curriculum Interview Form" was used to identify the state of knowledge and viewpoints about cross curriculum approach of the cross curriculum disciplines committee members staffed in preparing 2005 primary education curricula.

Before the "Cross Curriculum Interview Form" was used, form was performed with a program committee member. Afterwards, the form was finalized with experts. Cross Curriculum Interview Form was applied to eight members of cross curriculum disciplines committee. Interview coding switch and "Cross Curriculum Holistic Rubric" were used to analyze the data.

## 3. Results

### 3. 1. State Of Knowledge About Cross Curriculum Approach Of Cross Curriculum Disciplines Committee Members

In this section, the findings obtained from the interviews with the committee members are presented. "Cross Curriculum Holistic Rubric" was used to evaluate the answers of committee members about question 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 in this issue. Findings for the cross curriculum's definition (Q1), function (Q2), using reason (Q3), implementation (Q4) and evaluation (Q5) in teaching process and teachers' equipment require for cross curriculum teaching (Q6) are given in the Table1.

Table 1. Frequencies of the Question 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6<sup>th</sup>

	f					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Correct Answers (CA)	2	3	2	6	0	2
Partially Correct Answers (PCA)	4	2	2	0	7	1
Wrong Answers (WA)	2	1	2	0	0	0
Irrelevant Answers (IA) –No Answer	0	2	2	2	1	5
Total	8	8	8	8	8	8

#### Sample answers by committee members and our comments about question 1:

[Participant 4 – "cross curriculum disciplines is the disciplines that support the main outcomes included in the programs...."] (CA)

[Participant 5 – is the structure which includes the outcomes for students to acquire "] (PCA)

[Participant 2 - is all of the special areas including the necessary knowledge and competences in real life"] (WA)

When wrong answers are analyzed, it's seen that the participants think that cross curriculum disciplines are special fields. Cross curriculum disciplines are structures which support and improve program outcomes. In other words, cross curriculum disciplines are components which are parallel to the program issues and contribute to understanding of these issues and help to transform these issues to actual behaviors (MELS, 2008a). For this reason, we can not say that these are special fields not related to the program outcomes.

**Sample answers by committee members and our comments about question 2:**

*[Participant 5 – cross curriculum disciplines is the structure including the outcomes to support the program outcomes] (CA)*

*[Participant 6 – aims to form the basis for the main courses and relate them to the life] (PCA)*

*[Participant 3 – enables to establish a connection with the courses (disciplines)] (WA)*

*[Participant 7 – I don't think they have any function today] (IA)*

When wrong answers are analyzed, it is seen that one of the participants expresses that cross curriculum disciplines help to establish a connection with courses. However, cross curriculum disciplines doesn't have such a function, indeed. Cross curriculum disciplines aims to improve certain areas which are related to each other, into different main disciplines and to gain students the intended behavior for these areas (MELS, 2008a).

**Sample answers by committee members and our comments about question 3:**

*[Participant 4 – to help students acquire life skills] (CA)*

*[Participant 5 – will be used to help students acquire the subjects which cannot be included in the programs in order to stick to the schedule] (PCA)*

*[Participant 3 – a new approach to renew the curriculum] (WA)*

*[Participant 7 – the director working at that time can answer this question] (IA)*

When wrong answers are analyzed, it is seen that some of the participants perceive cross curriculum approach as an element that shows the education program is changed or enriched. However, the aim of using cross curriculum approach is not to renew the program or show how the program is rich and functional. The main aim of this approach is to help students acquire important life skills with an effective and accurate way in all learning areas and teaching years. When partially correct answers are analyzed, one of the participants said that some subjects are not put in the program as a main discipline. For this reason these are determined as a cross curriculum discipline. However, in the program used prior to 2005, while the "Human Rights and Citizenship" was a main discipline, now it is a cross curriculum discipline.

**Sample answers by committee members and our comments about question 4:**

*[Participant 6 – in a single activity, both cross curriculum discipline and course outcomes can be fulfilled] (CA)*

*[Participant 3 – It is crucial that teachers have reference books. It is very beneficial for the teachers to be supported with expert reference books regarding the subjects and activities taught to the students] (IA)*

When correct answers are analyzed, it is seen that the whole answers are related to preparing activities including cross curriculum and main disciplines outcomes. But this method is just one of the ways of implementing cross curriculum approach (e.g. arranging activity weeks or thematic days; make educational field trips; consulting experts, etc.) (SCC, 2007).

**Sample answers by committee members and our comments about question 5:**

*[Participant 6 – we are evaluating the cross curriculum disciplines in the same way we evaluate the course outcomes] (PCA)*

When partially correct answers are analyzed, it is seen that participants mentioned that student-centered approaches such as observation, project and performance tasks and peer assessment could be used to evaluate the cross curriculum disciplines. But none of the participants talked about the necessity of criteria for these methods.

**Sample answers by committee members and our comments about question 6:**

*[Participant 7 – should have enough field knowledge and cross curriculum mentality] (CA)*

*[Participant 4 – Teachers should have curiosity] (PCA)*

*[Participant 1 – the qualifications that quality teachers should possess] (IA)*

When answers are analyzed, we see that only two participants give correct answers about the qualifications teachers need to have. Nevertheless, these correct answers are limited to being researcher and having field knowledge.

### 3. 2. Program committee members' views about factors that play role in the selection of cross curriculum disciplines

Findings related to the program committee members' answers about factors playing a role in the selection of cross curriculum disciplines are given in the Table 2.

Table 2. Factors playing a role in the selection of cross curriculum disciplines according to program committee members

Views	f
Helps to acquire life skills	4
Essential subjects which take limited place in the courses	3
Areas which serve the country's national objectives and areas of the world where it wants to position	3

According to the table the outstanding view is that cross curriculum disciplines must serve to help students acquire life skills.

Committee members' sample answers:

*[Participant 2 – supports the main skills that students need to have in real life and represents the areas excluded from the main courses]*

*[Participant 6 – they need to be both common with European countries and peculiar to our country....our national and international concerns]*

*[Participant 7 – takes into account the demands of non-governmental organizations (e.g. charitable institutions, trade bodies and industrial unions, etc.)]*

When eight cross curriculum discipline in the program are examined, we can say that all of the views are valid except one. But it is not possible to make judgments about one opinion that is “according to non-governmental organizations some of the subjects take limited place in the courses”.

### 3. 3. Program committee members' views about enabling teachers to acquire information and skills about cross curriculum's structure, philosophy and implementation

Findings for the program committee members' answers about enabling teachers to acquire information and skills about cross curriculum's structure, philosophy and implementation are given in the Table 3.

Table 3. References regarding enabling teacher to acquire necessary information and skills to teachers about cross curriculum's structure, philosophy and implementation according to program committee members

Views	f
Seminars	6
In-service education	5
Faculties of education	3
Books	3
E-learning - Internet	1

According to the table the outstanding view is that seminars and in-service educations can be useful for this issue. In addition, faculties of education and books are considered as effective tools in acquiring knowledge and skills.

Committee members' sample answers:

*[Participant 1 – sample applications need to be done in in-service educations as well]*

*[Participant 2 – the pre-service teachers need to be informed by means of faculty of education and teachers via in-service education]*

*[Participant 4 – Nowadays, the most practical way is seminar.]*

According to program committee members, seminars and in-service educations are really effective to in enabling teacher to acquire necessary information and skills about structure, philosophy and implementation of cross curriculum approach. But when we examine the researches carried out about 2005 primary education program, findings indicate that teachers don't have enough information about cross curriculum approach and they have difficulty in applying the cross curriculum disciplines. Consequently, this makes us think that the seminars and in-service educations pertinent to cross curriculum disciplines are ineffective or seminars and in-service educations on this topic are not carried out.

### 3. 4. Program committee members' views about the problems faced during the structuring of cross curriculum disciplines into the program

The findings related to the answers of committee members about the problems faced during the structuring of cross curriculum disciplines into the program are given in the Table 4.

Table 4. Program committee members' views about the problems faced during the structuring of cross curriculum disciplines into the program

Views	f
Matching the outcomes	5
Embedding the outcomes into the program	4
Preparing the content and adopting them to the primary level	4
Incapability of People responsible in the program preparation to understand the approach	1

As seen in the Table 6, the prominent view about the problems faced during the structuring of cross curriculum disciplines into the program is matching the cross curriculum discipline outcomes with the course outcomes. Other featured views are embedding the cross curriculum discipline outcomes into the program, preparing the content and adopting them to the primary level. Committee members' sample answers:

[Participant 1 – "... Since the ones which could be matched with the course outcomes, not the all outcomes prepared by the responsible unit could be used."]

[Participant 4 – "I was too difficult to match the cross curriculum disciplines outcomes with the course outcomes."]

[Participant 7 – "Except for the limited number of program developers in the board of education and discipline and member of the board, the mentality or philosophy of cross curriculum discipline couldn't be comprehended, they were even rejected."]

The interviews also reveal that the committee members think that reasons behind the problems they expressed are the lack of communication between the committee members of cross curriculum discipline and other problems in the cooperation between the committees preparing the other programs

### 4. Discussions

- It was found out that the program committee members have limited knowledge about the definition, function, the reasons for usage of cross curriculum discipline and its implementation, evaluation in learning process, and the necessary qualifications that teacher need to possess.
- It was also found out that the program committee members consider the books as insufficient in terms of cross curriculum discipline.
- The program committee members indicated that seminar and in-service education would be effective in enabling teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills regarding the structure, philosophy and implementation of cross curriculum discipline.
- It was identified that while structuring the cross curriculum discipline into the program, the following problems were encountered: matching the cross curriculum discipline outcomes with course outcomes and embedding them into the program, preparing the contents related to cross curriculum discipline and adopting them to the primary level.

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